

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

Samuel French Acting Edition

A Daughter's A Daughter

by Agatha Christie

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK

Copyright © 1931 Agatha Christie Limited. All Rights Reserved.
'AGATHA CHRISTIE' and the Agatha Christie Signature Mark and
the AC Monogram logo are registered trademarks of Agatha Christie
Limited in the UK and elsewhere. All Rights Reserved.

A DAUGHTER'S A DAUGHTER is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-03106-9

concordtheatricals.co.uk

concordtheatricals.com

www.agathachristielimited.com

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

**UNITED KINGDOM AND WORLD
EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA**

licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7200

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French,
depending upon country of performance.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *A DAUGHTER'S A DAUGHTER* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

No one shall make any changes in this title for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title, or part of this title, to any social media websites.

For all enquiries regarding motion picture, television, and other media rights, please contact Samuel French.

The right of Agatha Christie to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

For all enquiries regarding motion picture, television, and other media rights, please contact Samuel French.

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Samuel French, against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees. Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

A DAUGHTER'S A DAUGHTER was first presented by Smith and Whiley Productions at Theatre Royal, Bath, on the 9th July 1956. The performance was directed by Maurice Jones. The cast was as follows:

EDITH Daphne Riggs
ANN PRENTICE Audrey Noble
RICHARD CAULDFIELD Maurice Jones
DAME LAURA WHITSTABLE Margaret Gibson
SARAH PRENTICE Mary Manson
JERRY LLOYD Trevor Bannister
LAWRENCE STEENE Peter Henchie
BASIL MOWBRAY Henry Rayner
DORIS CAULDFIELD Kathleen Cravos

CHARACTERS

EDITH

ANN PRENTICE

RICHARD CAULDFIELD

DAME LAURA WHITSTABLE

SARAH PRENTICE

JERRY LLOYD

LAWRENCE STEENE

BASIL MOWBRAY

DORIS CAULDFIELD

NOTES ON CASTING

Jerry Lloyd may double with Lawrence Steene or Basil Mowbray.
Richard Cauldfield may double with Basil Mowbray or Lawrence Steene.

SETTING

The play takes place between 1945 and 1949 at the flat of Ann Prentice, in a red brick Victorian mansion block near Sloane Square, London.

ACT I

Scene One

(ANN PRENTICE's flat in London. A winter afternoon, 1945. It is a comfortable room with quilted chintz, some nice pieces of furniture and lots of flowers. There is also a small writing desk with a telephone on it. A door leads to the hall, and another to the bedrooms. EDITH, an old family servant, is on the telephone.)

EDITH. No chicken? ...No duck? ...Not even a wood pigeon? ...Yes, well, can I speak to Mr. Stokes himself? ...Yes... Is that Mr. Stokes? ...It's very special, Mr. Stokes... Mrs. Prentice's maid speaking. Our young lady's coming home today - unexpected... Yes, out of the WAAFs from Egypt... Yes, it's an occasion... Well, thank you, Mr. Stokes, that's very kind of you, I'm sure.

(She hangs up. The front door is heard closing and ANN PRENTICE enters, in a rush. She is a woman of thirty-nine, slight and youthful looking with a sweet, rather timid, personality. She carries flowers and some parcels.)

ANN. Have you managed to get something Edith? Or shall I rush out again? Perhaps Harrods?

EDITH. I've got a chicken.

ANN. Oh Edith, how clever of you!

EDITH. Mr. Stokes obliged us when he heard Miss Sarah was arriving.

(She takes some of the things from ANN.)

ANN. Oh dear, look at the time! Where's the green vase?

EDITH. Here, Ma'am.

(ANN hurriedly unwraps the flowers and puts them in the vase.)

ANN. Of course, we could have gone out to dinner but I thought it would be much nicer for Sarah's first evening to have it here.

EDITH. Yes, she's a rare one for her home, Miss Sarah.

ANN. I still can't believe she's really coming – now – today – in less than half an hour! Why it was two days ago I got that letter saying she wouldn't be released for another three months.

EDITH. That's the government all over! Never know their minds from one minute to another.

ANN. Oh dear, I must hurry. Where's the other vase – the little one for her dressing table? It's almost time to go and meet her.

(EDITH fetches the vase. ANN begins to arrange the flowers..)

EDITH. What about Mr. Cauldfield?

ANN. If he doesn't come before I go, you'll have to explain.

(EDITH tries hard to convey reserve.)

EDITH. Yes, Ma'am.

ANN. He'll understand.

EDITH. Yes, Ma'am.

ANN. I wish – no I don't... *(Agitated.)* I suppose Sarah won't have got my letter.

EDITH. Makes it all very difficult.

ANN. *(Crossly.)* Oh, don't be so gloomy, Edith.

EDITH. Miss Sarah was never one to like changes.

ANN. You'll have to finish these, Edith. Where's my bag? I must tidy myself up.

(She exits to the bedrooms. EDITH continues arranging the flowers.)

ANN. *(Offstage.)* Undo the cigarettes.

EDITH. Yes, Ma'am.

ANN. You put Sarah's sheets on her bed? The yellow ones?

EDITH. Yes, yes.

(The doorbell rings. EDITH exits to the hall. After a pause she returns, ushering in RICHARD, who is carrying some flowers. He is a man of forty-five, straightforward, practical, kindly but not very tactful. He hides shyness under an over-assured manner.)

RICHARD. Good evening, Edith, I brought these –

(He stops at the sight of all the vases and floral displays. ANN can be heard down the corridor shouting instructions.)

ANN. *(Offstage.)* Did you get Sarah's silver toilet things out?

EDITH. Yes, Ma'am.

ANN. *(Offstage.)* Put those tulips in the Chinese bowl?

EDITH. Yes, Ma'am.

RICHARD. What's all the excitement?

EDITH. It's Miss Sarah, sir. We've got a telegram. She'll be home today.

RICHARD. Sarah? Back from the WAAFs or whatever it is?

EDITH. That's right sir. Demobbed at last.

RICHARD. But I thought she wouldn't be out for another three months?

EDITH. That's the government, that is. Playful!

(She exits to the hall, carrying the flowers. ANN enters hurriedly from the bedrooms.)

ANN. Edith, where's my blue coat?

(She catches sight of RICHARD.)

Richard! Darling!

(He takes her in his arms.)

RICHARD. Well, well, well, what a to-do! Edith tells me Sarah's expected.

ANN. *(Excitedly.)* Yes, my Sarah. I haven't seen her for nearly three years. Think of it! I'm nearly mad with joy.

RICHARD. I'm glad. It'll be fun meeting Sarah.

ANN. I know you'll love her. She's so impulsive and affectionate. I'm sure you'll get on together.

RICHARD. Of course we will. Your daughter is sure to be a sweet person.

(She kisses him gratefully.)

ANN. Dear Richard.

RICHARD. Rather nice that she'll be home for the wedding.

ANN. Oh dear...

RICHARD. What's the matter?

ANN. I daresay I'm ridiculous, but I do love Sarah very much. You wouldn't want me not to, would you?

RICHARD. Of course not, she's your daughter.

ANN. Dear Richard.

RICHARD. She'll be home for the wedding.

ANN. Oh Richard, you know, I don't suppose she's got my letter – telling her about us.

RICHARD. *(Humorously.)* Hmm, rather awkward.

ANN. *(Apprehensively.)* Oh dear, I wonder what she'll say.

RICHARD. *(Cheerfully.)* Probably be a bit of a shock.

ANN. Sarah does so hate change. Oh dear –

RICHARD. Cheer up, darling. Don't look so distressed. Daughters can't forbid the banns.

ANN. If only –

RICHARD. *(Amused.)* You look like a little girl who's been stealing the jam. It'll be all right, sweetheart. Sarah and I will soon make friends.

ANN. I wonder.

RICHARD. Leave it to me.

ANN. I do hope it'll be all right.

RICHARD. Darling, you really must not let things worry you so.

ANN. I don't.

RICHARD. Yes, you do. (*Seriously.*) Really, darling, why must you work yourself up over things that are perfectly simple and straightforward?

ANN. It's just that I don't know exactly how to tell her – how to put it.

RICHARD. Can't you just say: "Sarah, this is Richard Cauldfield. I'm getting married to him next Tuesday."

ANN. Quite baldly, like that?

RICHARD. (*Smiling.*) Isn't it really the best way?

ANN. I believe it is. What you don't quite understand is that I feel so frightfully silly telling Sarah I'm going to be married.

RICHARD. Silly? Why?

ANN. One *does* feel silly telling a grown up daughter one's going to be married.

RICHARD. I really can't see why.

ANN. I suppose because young people have an unconscious arrogance – they think love is their monopoly. It strikes them as a little ridiculous that middle-aged people should fall in love and marry.

RICHARD. Nonsense! There's nothing whatever ridiculous about it.

ANN. Ah, but you see Richard, you don't think so because you're middle-aged, too.

RICHARD. Now look here, Ann, I know you and Sarah are very devoted to each other. I daresay the girl may feel rather jealous about me. I quite understand that. It's only natural, and I'm quite prepared to make allowances. I daresay she'll dislike me a good deal to begin with, but she'll come round. And she must be made to realise that you've a right to live your own life and find your own happiness.

ANN. (*Quickly.*) Sarah won't grudge me my happiness, if that's what you mean. There's nothing mean or petty about her.

RICHARD. She'll probably be rather glad you are going to get married. It will leave her freer to lead her own life.

ANN. Really, Richard, you sound like a Victorian novel.

RICHARD. You mothers never want the bird to leave the nest.

ANN. Sarah's been out of the nest for three years now.

RICHARD. Exactly. She has got used to independence.

ANN. I wonder. Her letters, they've been so homesick – especially lately. At first she enjoyed the fun of it all, but now all she writes about is how much she's looking forward to coming home. Sarah's very fond of her home, you know.

RICHARD. Bless her. So she should be with a mother like you! All the same, now don't misunderstand me Ann, but sometimes even a mother's love and devotion can be too much of a good thing.

ANN. Oh, I know.

RICHARD. I remember so well when I was a young man. I was very fond of my father and my mother, but living with them was curiously cramping. Always asking me how late I was going to be, and, "Don't forget the key," "Try not to make a noise when you come in," "You forgot to turn out the hall light last time." "What, going out again tonight?" "You don't seem to care about your home at all, after all we've done for you." I did care for my home but, oh God, how I wanted to feel free!

ANN. Yes, I understand that.

RICHARD. Sarah's very fond of you and she won't want to hurt your feelings, but I'll bet she wants a life of her own. There are so many careers open to girls nowadays. Girls take on a job just like men do nowadays.

ANN. Isn't it rather a question of economic necessity?

RICHARD. Eh?

ANN. Doing a job and leading your own life always sounds so delightful in newspaper articles or books, but really it's not so amusing. You get up early and work hard all day, probably shut up in an office with a lot of uncongenial people. You come back cross and tired. If you're hard up of course, you have to do it, but you know, Richard, I really don't think having a job is such fun as you make out.

RICHARD. Well, it depends on the job.

ANN. I've done office work all through the war. I was very glad to give it up.

RICHARD. My dear, you did your job well! You know what your job is now?

ANN. *(Smiling.)* Yes, sir?

RICHARD. To make a home for me.

ANN. *(Softly.)* My dearest.

(She laughs. RICHARD puts his arms round her. They kiss with a deep contentment.)

RICHARD. I've been so lonely, Ann.

ANN. Dear, dear Richard.

RICHARD. You do care for me? Shall I be able to make you happy?

ANN. I love you, Richard. Indeed, I do love you.

RICHARD. My sweet –

(EDITH enters from the hall.)

EDITH. Excuse me, Ma'am. It is twenty past four.

ANN. Good heavens! I shall miss her. I'd forgotten. Where's my bag?

(ANN snatches it up and exits hurriedly to the hall. The front door is heard closing. RICHARD looks after her, frowning. EDITH steals a glance at him then proceeds to tidy up the flower mess.)

EDITH. Tulips is Miss Sarah's favourite flowers.

RICHARD. The whole place seems to revolve round Miss Sarah.

EDITH. Ah, she's got a way with her, Miss Sarah has. I've often noticed as there's young ladies who leave their things about, expect everything mended for them, run you off your feet clearing up after them – and yet there's nothing that's too much trouble for you to do for them. There's others as give no trouble at all, everything neat, no extra work made – and yet you don't seem to fancy them in the same way. It's an unjust world. Some has the kicks and some has the ha'pence.

RICHARD. You've been with Mrs. Prentice a long time, haven't you, Edith?

EDITH. Eighteen years. Come a year afore Mr. Prentice died. He was a nice gentleman.

(RICHARD looks at her sharply.)

RICHARD. I hope we're going to be friends, Edith.

EDITH. Well, sir, it's early days to tell that. I hope so, I'm sure.

RICHARD. I'm afraid it will give you a certain amount of extra work.

EDITH. Naturally there'll be a bit of a change with a gentleman in the house. Meals is different to begin with.

RICHARD. I'm really not a very large eater.

EDITH. It's not that – it's the kind of meals. Gentlemen don't hold with trays.

RICHARD. Women hold with them a good deal too much.

EDITH. That may be. I'm not denying that a gentleman about the place cheers things up, as it were.

RICHARD. Thank you, Edith. I was getting quite depressed.

EDITH. Oh, don't you worry, sir. I shan't leave Mrs. Prentice. It's never been my way to quit if there's trouble in the offing.

RICHARD. Trouble? What trouble?

EDITH. Well, sir, it's not my place to say anything. But if you and Mrs. Prentice had got married and Miss Sarah had come back to find it all over and done with – well, it might have been better, if you take my meaning.

RICHARD. Nonsense. I can tell you –

(The doorbell rings.)

EDITH. Who's that now, I wonder.

(She exits to the hall.)

RICHARD. Damned old fool.

(EDITH enters with DAME LAURA WHITSTABLE. She is between sixty and seventy and dressed in the Edwardian style. Everything about her is a little more than life size, her voice, her uncompromising frankness, her worldliness. EDITH exits to the bedrooms, leaving them to talk.)

DAME LAURA. How d'you do, Mr. Cauldfield? I hear Sarah's expected.

RICHARD. Yes, Ann's gone to meet her.

DAME LAURA. Well, that's very nice, I'm sure. She'll be in time for the wedding.

RICHARD. Yes, yes of course.

DAME LAURA. What's the trouble?

RICHARD. Trouble? There isn't any trouble.

DAME LAURA. Sarah cutting up rough about the marriage?

RICHARD. She doesn't know about it yet. Ann wrote to her a fortnight ago, but she must have started before she got the letter.

DAME LAURA. I see squalls ahead.

RICHARD. I don't see why there should be.

DAME LAURA. Oh come, man, use your imagination. No, perhaps you haven't any.

RICHARD. I suppose it's possible Sarah may resent her mother marrying again?

DAME LAURA. She may resent it, but she can't stop it. Not if you play your cards properly.

RICHARD. Look here, Dame Laura, what's Sarah really like?

DAME LAURA. Sarah? Sarah's a dear child – full of life and vitality. Impulsive, affectionate, egotistical, as she should be at her age, and devoted to her mother.

RICHARD. Over devoted, perhaps?

DAME LAURA. No I shouldn't say so. But she's unsure of herself, unsure of life, like most of the young people nowadays. Our generation had something that this generation hasn't got. Stability. Solid earth under their feet.

RICHARD. You're a very unusual woman, Dame Laura.

DAME LAURA. You mean I'm a celebrated woman? Hmm, I've learnt one thing. Whatever one accomplishes in life is really very little, and it could always, quite easily, have been accomplished by somebody else.

RICHARD. What a depressing conclusion.

DAME LAURA. Possibly. It shouldn't be.

RICHARD. I don't agree with you. If a man's to do anything worth doing, he must believe in himself.

DAME LAURA. Why should he? You may think me old fashioned, but I would prefer a man to believe in God, and have knowledge of himself.

RICHARD. Belief – knowledge, it's the same thing!

DAME LAURA. I beg your pardon. It's not at all the same thing! One of my pet theories, quite unrealisable of course, that's the pleasant part about theories, is that everybody should spend one month a year in the middle of a desert. Camped by a well, of course, and plentifully supplied with dates or whatever you eat in deserts.

RICHARD. (*Tolerantly.*) Well, with a selection of the world's ten best books, perhaps, it might be –

DAME LAURA. Ah, but that's just it. No books! Books are some of the worst drugs we have. With enough to eat

and drink and nothing, absolutely nothing, else. You'd have to think, you'd have, at last, a fairly good chance to make acquaintance with yourself.

RICHARD. Don't you think most of us know ourselves pretty well?

DAME LAURA. I certainly don't! One hasn't time, in these days, to recognise anything except one's more pleasing characteristics!

(RICHARD speaks politely but somewhat insincerely.)

RICHARD. All this is much too clever for me.

(There is silence as she regards him.)

DAME LAURA. You know, you've got one rather rare characteristic.

RICHARD. What's that?

DAME LAURA. You don't insist on talking about yourself. *(Kindly.)* I'm glad you're going to marry Ann.

RICHARD. That's very nice of you, Dame Laura. Ann's so unselfish, never thinks of herself. She – she wants looking after.

(The doorbell rings in a prolonged fashion. EDITH hurries in from the bedrooms and exits to the hall.)

EDITH. I know who that is, right enough!

(The front door is heard opening.)

SARAH. *(Offstage.)* Hullo Edith. Yes, it's me! Where's Mother?

(SARAH enters, carrying a suitcase. She is young, attractive and vital, with a self-assurance that is just a little forced – masking some hidden insecurities. She is followed by JERRY LLOYD, carrying a second suitcase. He is a charming man in RAF uniform and obviously in love with SARAH.)

SARAH. Where's Mother? Why didn't she come and meet me? Hullo, Dame Laura!

(She kisses her.)

DAME LAURA. How's my godchild?

SARAH. I'm fine. Where's Mother?

(She sees RICHARD.)

DAME LAURA. This is Richard Cauldfield.

(SARAH speaks politely but completely uninterested.)

SARAH. How d'you do?

(She turns to JERRY.)

Squadron Leader Lloyd. Dame Laura Whitstable. Edith, where's Mother?

(EDITH enters with a suitcase.)

EDITH. Gone to meet you.

SARAH. Oh, how stupid.

(She looks around the room.)

Oh, it's just the same! Same old chintzes – same shell box. Where's the cushion with the birds on it?

EDITH. Gone to be cleaned.

SARAH. Oh, you've moved the little writing desk. It used to be across the window.

EDITH. Gives more space this way.

SARAH. No, I want it as it was. Jerry, move it with me.

(They take an end each and move the desk.)

Everything's got to be just the same.

JERRY. Time marches on.

SARAH. Not here it doesn't. I won't let it! Oh, it's nice to be back. What about my clothes, Edith? Have I got some clothes still?

EDITH. Laid out in your room – what the moths haven't got at.

SARAH. (*Indignantly.*) You shouldn't have let the moths get at them.

(*She laughs jokingly then runs at EDITH and kisses her.*)

Oh Edith, it's lovely to see your dear, old, sourpuss face.

EDITH. Sourpuss face indeed!

SARAH. Yes, nothing's changed.

(*She makes for the bedrooms.*)

EDITH. Isn't it? You wait and see!

SARAH. I want my clothes.

(*She exits. EDITH follows with her case.*)

(*Offstage.*) Get yourself a drink, Jerry. There'll be something around.

DAME LAURA. In that cupboard there.

JERRY. Thanks. Can I get you one?

DAME LAURA. Thank you.

(*JERRY opens the cupboard then turns to RICHARD.*)

JERRY. What about you, sir?

RICHARD. No thanks. I - I'm just off.

(*EDITH enters from the bedrooms. He turns to her.*)

Tell Mrs. Prentice I'll be back later.

(*DAME LAURA nods her approval.*)

DAME LAURA. Very wise.

(*EDITH sees him out. The front door is heard closing. JERRY brings a drink across to DAME LAURA.*)

Thank you.

(*She looks at his ribbons.*)

D.F.C.?

JERRY. (*Embarrassed.*) Oh, that!

DAME LAURA. Being demobilised?

JERRY. Next week.

DAME LAURA. And after that?

JERRY. (*Vaguely.*) Oh, a job of some sort, I suppose.

DAME LAURA. What kind of a job?

JERRY. (*Cheerfully.*) I haven't any idea. Something with action and a bit of initiative. I wouldn't fancy being stuck down in an office, you know. There are a lot of us. They'll have to find us decent jobs, won't they?

DAME LAURA. I hope so. (*Gravely.*) Yes, indeed, I hope so.

JERRY. Anyway, I'm going to have a good time first.

DAME LAURA. I expect you will.

(She puts her glass down.)

Well, I must be off.

JERRY. Goodbye.

(DAME LAURA exits to the hall. The front door is heard closing. JERRY strolls round. He turns on the wireless but a talk is on and he quickly turns it off.)

Sarah!

SARAH. (*Offstage.*) Coming!

(She enters, with a pullover and a skirt on.)

I think I've got fatter. Hullo, has Laura gone? She's such a pet! She's my godmother.

JERRY. Rather formidable, isn't she? Drink?

SARAH. Yes, please. Oh, she's frightfully celebrated, and lectures to learned Societies and all that, and barks at people in that gruff voice of hers, but she's a pet really. Has that man gone too?

JERRY. Who was he?

SARAH. Never saw him in my life. Must be one of mother's pickups.

(EDITH enters from the hall.)

Who is he, Edith?

EDITH. He's a friend of your mother's, Miss Sarah.

SARAH. She needs me home to choose her friends for her.

EDITH. Don't you take to him?

SARAH. No, I don't.

(EDITH picks up the second suitcase and exits to the bedrooms.)

EDITH. That's a pity.

SARAH. What did she say?

JERRY. I think she said it was a pity.

SARAH. How funny!

JERRY. Sounds cryptic.

SARAH. I do wish Mother would come. I want you to meet her.

JERRY. I want to meet her.

SARAH. She's an absolute pet.

JERRY. I'm sure she is.

SARAH. Are you going to your uncle's?

JERRY. I suppose so.

SARAH. Is he pretty dreadful?

JERRY. Quite ghastly. *(Imitating.)* "Very glad to have you home, my boy – er – ah – hope now all this excitement's over you'll come into the office – er ah – could do with you – er – ah we're – er – shorthanded."

SARAH. Oh Jerry, he sounds frightful!

JERRY. He's rolling in money. Money that ought to have come to me! If Great Uncle Henry hadn't married his housekeeper more or less on his deathbed –

SARAH. Oh well, never mind all that. It's a long time ago.

JERRY. Yes, but it's so damned unfair.

SARAH. Anyway you wouldn't have had much of the money by now. It would all have gone in death duties.

JERRY. I suppose that's true.

(The front door is heard. ANN enters, breathless.)

ANN. Sarah! Darling!

SARAH. Mother!

(She rushes to her and they embrace.)

ANN. Darling, I was so stupid, missing you. I started late.

SARAH. You were an idiot. You look just the same. Oh, this is Jerry.

JERRY. How do you do?

SARAH. Squadron Leader Lloyd. Mother, you're doing your hair a different way, aren't you?

ANN. Just a little differently, perhaps.

SARAH. Well, do it the old way tomorrow.

JERRY. What a dyed-in-the-wool Tory you are, Sarah!

SARAH. I like things to stay the same.

(EDITH enters from the hall with a tray of tea.)

Hurrah, here's tea. And the Dresden cups. Aren't they lovely, Jerry?

(EDITH turns to ANN.)

EDITH. Mr. Cauldfield left word, Ma'am, to say as he'd be back later.

SARAH. Who's Cauldfield, Mother? Why is he coming back later? You don't want him, do you?

(A little flustered, ANN turns to JERRY.)

ANN. You – you'll have some tea won't you?

JERRY. No thanks, I must be getting along. Just came to see Sarah doing her homecoming act. Bye-bye, Sarah. I'll give you a ring.

SARAH. Bye-bye Jerry.

(JERRY exits. The front door is heard.)

ANN. He's very nice, darling.

SARAH. *(Carelessly.)* Oh, Jerry's all right. One of the best.

ANN. Are you and he?

SARAH. Mother! Don't be so Victorian. We're not engaged or anything of that kind. Why should we be?

ANN. Darling, I only just wondered.

SARAH. (*Jokingly.*) I might as well ask you if you're engaged to Mr. Cauliflower or whatever his name is.

ANN. I – I –

(**EDITH** *sniffs and exits to the hall.*)

SARAH. What's the matter with Edith?

ANN. (*Faintly.*) I – I don't know.

SARAH. Well, give me some tea, Mother. I'm longing for some tea. Oh! Edith's made her special little cakes! How does she get the stuff? Everyone says food is awfully difficult here. Is it?

ANN. Yes, yes, it is. But Edith has her methods.

SARAH. Good for Edith. You know, Mother, I feel as though I'd never been away.

ANN. Do you darling?

SARAH. I couldn't have borne it if everything hadn't been just the same.

ANN. It is just the same. It always will be just the same, Sarah.

(**SARAH** *looks at her in surprise.*)

SARAH. Is anything the matter, Mother?

ANN. The matter? Of course not.

SARAH. Well, you look all queer.

ANN. Do I?

SARAH. What is it, darling?

ANN. Nothing. At least – well, there is something –

SARAH. Yes?

ANN. You mustn't think – I mean, it won't make any difference. Oh, I do hope you'll understand –

(*She fidgets awkwardly. A slow grin comes over SARAH's face.*)

You see, I – I – oh dear.

SARAH. (*Amused.*) Darling, what is the matter with you? Are you trying to break it to me gently that I'm going to have a step-pa?

ANN. Yes. How did you guess?

SARAH. Well, it isn't very difficult. You are in such a dither.
Did you think I'd mind very much?

ANN. (*Eagerly.*) Don't you?

SARAH. Of course not! You're really quite nice looking still.
If only you weren't so obstinate about having your
eyebrows plucked.

ANN. (*Playfully.*) I like my eyebrows!

SARAH. And you've always had lots of old boys hovering
round. Old Colonel Lund was quite crazy about you
and Commander Price Jones has been making eyes at
you for years. You're awfully attractive, darling.

ANN. (*Relieved.*) Then, you really don't mind?

SARAH. No, I think you're quite right. Father died nearly
sixteen years ago, and you ought to have some sort of
sex life before it's too late – you're not the kind to have
affairs.

ANN. Oh!

SARAH. So I think it's quite the right thing for you to do.
With you it would have to be marriage.

ANN. Oh, Sarah, darling, I am so glad.

SARAH. (*Grinning.*) Dash it all, Mother, did you think I was
going to be all jealous and peculiar?

ANN. No of course not, but I wasn't sure.

SARAH. Darling, you have the most Edwardian ideas –
more than that, positively Victorian.

ANN. (*Meekly.*) I suppose I have.

SARAH. It will be quite useful to have a man about the
house. Who is it, by the way, Colonel Lund?

ANN. No, it's – it's Richard Cauldfield.

SARAH. What? That man who was here just now? But you
can't, Mother, he's awful.

ANN. He's not awful at all.

SARAH. Sorry. But – well – oh, Mother, you could do a lot
better than that.

ANN. Sarah, you don't understand. I – I love him.

SARAH. (*Incredulously.*) Do you mean you are *in love* with him? You mean you've actually got a passion for him?

ANN. (*Faintly.*) Yes.

SARAH. I can't believe it.

ANN. You haven't seen him for more than a moment or two. When you know him better, I'm sure you'll like each other.

SARAH. Perhaps. He's such an aggressive type.

ANN. I daresay he was shy.

SARAH. Well, it's your funeral, of course.

ANN. (*Feebly.*) I'm sure you'll get to like each other.

(There is a pause.)

SARAH. You know, Mother, you really do need someone to look after you.

ANN. What do you mean?

SARAH. Just because I'm away, you go and do something silly.

ANN. Sarah, you're very unkind.

SARAH. Sorry, darling, but I do believe in absolute frankness.

ANN. Well, I don't think I do.

SARAH. How long has this been going on?

ANN. We got engaged about three weeks ago. I wrote to you.

SARAH. Oh, good God! Really Mother! Has he got any money?

ANN. He's quite able to support me. (*Laughing.*) Really, Sarah, you call me Victorian – you're behaving just like a Victorian father!

SARAH. Well, somebody has to look after you. You're quite unfit to look after yourself. You must understand, Mother darling, that I'm terribly fond of you. I don't want you to go and make a silly mistake.

ANN. Oh Sarah!

SARAH. Is he a bachelor or a widower or divorced?

ANN. A widower. His wife died having her first baby – and the baby died too.

SARAH. I can quite see how he got at you. It was the sob stuff.

ANN. Oh don't be ridiculous, Sarah.

SARAH. Has he got any relations? Sisters, mothers – that sort of thing?

ANN. No.

SARAH. That's a blessing, anyway. Where are you going to live?

ANN. Here. It seems the best thing. Richard has a service flat which he's giving up. There's lots of room here for us all. Oh, Sarah, darling, you don't mind too much, do you?

SARAH. Of course I don't. I just want you to be happy. When were you thinking of getting married?

ANN. (*Guiltily.*) Next week. Tuesday.

SARAH. (*Horried.*) Next week! Oh you can't Mother.

ANN. It's all arranged.

SARAH. But you didn't know I was coming home. You must put it off a bit, you really must. (*Childishly.*) I've been away for nearly three years. You can't go off and marry the minute I come home. Let's have a little time together first.

ANN. Well, I don't know.

SARAH. Please, darling, please. Let me have a little time to get used to it. Put it off a month. Please, Mother, please.

ANN. Oh my darling. Yes, yes of course.

(*The doorbell rings.*)

Oh dear, I expect that's Richard. Sarah you will be nice to him? You will try –

SARAH. Of course I shall be nice. Don't worry.

(*The front door is heard. EDITH enters and announces.*)

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk

or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.



Samuel French London



SamuelFrenchLtd